TASK FORCE RUSSIA -- TRIWEEKLY REPORT -- 31 JULY-20 AUGUST 1993

TRIWEEKLY REPORT OF SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

JOINT COMMISSION SUPPORT BRANCH (JCSB)

TASK FORCE RUSSIA (POW/MIA) (TFR)

Period of Report: 31 July - 20 August 1993

HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

This report has been prepared for the use of the Commission in pursuit of our mission. While it is an unclassified document in accordance with Department of Defense classification guidelines for POW/MIA information, it nonetheless contains casualty-related information and should not be disseminated outside of Commission channels pending efforts by the Department of Defense Executive Agent to locate and notify as many of the next of kin as feasible.

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Period of Report: 31 July--20 August 1993

1. SUMMARY:

A. The main effort in both Moscow and Washington was in support of the impending (28 August--4 September) meeting of the Joint Commission. TFR assisted in coordinating the agenda for the meeting and continued its program of formal notification to the Russians-on specific issues and cases the U.S. side views as unresolved. The Russian side continued its record of non-substantive responses or no responses at all. The Russian security services currently provide no evidence of serious cooperation.

B. In Washington, enlisted analysts from JCSB developed an extremely promising series of leads through detailed examination of documents provided by the Russians and compared to U.S. holdings. JCSB was able to build a powerful scenario from disparate evidence to show that a largely-intact F-86--probably with pilot--was recovered from the mouth of the Yalu River and sent to Moscow during the Korean War. Further, JCSB analysts identified specific files and page numbers that were missing from documentation provided to us by the Russian side, with the implication that the most sensitive information on U.S. prisoners interrogated by Soviets during the Korean War may have been withheld.

C. Both offices also prepared for the visit to Armenia, which will occur in conjunction with the U.S. side of the Joint Commission's deployment to Russia. Of note, while conducting an informal search of the site of the 2 September 1958 shootdown in Armenia, an Amembassy representative and local national found an identification tag and a probable human bone fragment. The Government of Armenia, pledging full cooperation, has halted any further searches pending the arrival of an expert team from CILHI. The deployment of the CILHI team will slightly precede the arrival of the U.S. side of the Joint Commission. During the U.S. side's stopover in Yerevan, a wreath-laying ceremony will honor the shootdown victims.

D. JCSB prepared a lengthy study of the Korean War case to date, updated case files on all ten relevant Cold War shootdown cases, and "talking points" papers for WWII, the Korean War, the Cold War, and Indochina.

E. TFR continued its aggressive interview program, although the traditional Russian August vacation period hindered the effort somewhat. A TFR representative deployed to Estonia for follow-up interviews

with local nationals who claimed to have encountered U.S. POWs in the camp system. The interviews, detailed below, complement information gained from other ex-inmates as to prisoner locations, but do not allow the establishment of POW identities.

F. At JCSB's request, nearly 800 more pages of the Klaus files were declassified by the Central Documentation Office and will be forwarded to next-of-kin through service casualty offices. An additional 600-plus pages are pending declassification.

G. A Korean War veteran, Corporal Nick Flores, was presented with a belated Honorable Discharge and POW service medal by the U.S. Marine Corps. Flores, who behaved with great courage while a prisoner and made three escape attempts, had first-hand contact with Soviet interrogators, who initially mistook him for an F-86 pilot. Flores' record was corrected and upgraded through the offices of the DPMO, based upon research conducted by JCSB. Pertinent aspects of his case are detailed below.

2. UPDATE ON ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS:

A. While discussing the 2 September 1958 shootdown of a USAF C-130 over Armenia, General Volkogonov stated that he found it interesting that the main report on the incident was a GRU report, not a document from the KGB or the Border Guards. Volkogonov expressed curiosity as to why military intelligence would be involved in a border violation incident, then noted that "many secret actions of the KGB were accomplished on verbal orders," and that many documents that may have existed have since been destroyed, some as "of no historical interest." In the same conversation, Volkogonov remarked that the Russian side would not put "artificial limits" on the period of the Joint Commission's work--apparently backtracking from earlier remarks to the effect that the Joint Commission's work was to be completed by the end of 1993.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW, DTG: 122534Z AUG 93]

B. TFR continues to attempt to contact Vladimir Schoebel, an ex-camp inmate who may have been mistaken for an American. Amembassy Minsk is supporting this effort.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 121138Z AUG 93]

3. EVENTS, INTERVIEWS, CONTACTS, AND MEETINGS ATTENDED:

A. JCSB contacted, interviewed and brought to Washington Korean War Marine Corporal Nick Flores, an ex-POW who had personal contact with-Russian interrogators. A truck driver by military specialty, Flores was captured on 28 November 1950, three miles from Koto-Ri during the Marines' fighting withdrawal in the wake of Chinese intervention. As a POW, Flores distinguished himself by his determination to care for ill and dying fellow prisoners, and by three escape attempts. One carefully-planned escape brought him into direct contact with Soviet interrogators. Flores' fellow inmates had provided him with Air Force military clothing, since it was better suited to survival needs in the harsh climate. The escape went well initially--until Flores stumbled into a camouflaged Soviet-manned air defense site. The gunners and the officer in charge were Slavs, not Koreans. By coincidence, an F-86 had just been shot down in the vicinity, and the Soviets assumed that Flores, in flight jacket and flying boots, was the pilot. The Soviets did not bother coordinating with the North Koreans or Chinese. They simply blindfolded Flores and loaded him onto a truck. A journey of several hours finally took them across a long bridge--which, given the local terrain and infrastructure, had to be a span over the Yalu River, crossing into China. The truck delivered Flores to a military facility which, due to the echo and cavernous feel, he initially believed to be a cave (later, when the blindfold was removed, he found that he had been held in a large bunker at a military airfield--probably Antung). Non-Asian interrogators, conversing among themselves in a language Flores believed to be Russian, questioned Flores in English. He was admonished repeatedly to confess that he was "the pilot of the F-86," and that he had been engaged in germ warfare. When Flores responded that he was just a truck driver and an escaped POW, the Soviets would not believe him. He was never physically abused, but the session continued for about four hours. Finally, another officer joined the interrogation and, following an exchange in Russian, the main interrogator lost his temper. The session

ended. Flores was then put in a holding cell, where a non-Asian nurse attended to him. Later he was put back on a truck, blindfold removed. He was then driven back into North Korea and returned to his original captors. A jury of POW-collaborators in his camp sentenced him to ten months' solitary confinement. Recommended for a commendation for heroism upon his release, Flores was, instead, sent home with a General Discharge, due to minor disciplinary infractions in his previous service. When DPMO, supported by JCSB's research, brought the full case before the Marine Corps, the Marines acted with great expedience to correct the error. Ex-Corporal Nick Flores now has his Honorable Discharge and POW service medal, both presented to him on 6 August 1993 by General Walter Boomer Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

B. A TFR representative visited Estonia to conduct follow-up interviews with local correspondents.

(1) Ain Eenmaa, who served in Vorkuta as a political prisoner from 1945 to 1955, encountered an inmate in 1950 who claimed to be an American. The "American" said he was an Army officer, that his name was Eisenhower, and that he was a distant relative of General Eisenhower. He said he had been kidnapped in Berlin by the Soviets. [TFR note: The "Eisenhower" story has been reported previously.]

(2) Boris Uibo (misspelled as "Ulbo" in previous reporting) claimed to have met an American named Gary or Harry in Camp No. 18, near Potma, Mordovia, sometime in 1952. Uibo is convinced that the inmate was an American who was shot down in the Korean War. The American was "no older than 25," and smoked. A fellow Estonian, Captain Pik, knew English and often talked to the American, but Pik is now deceased. Uibo and the American worked together for about a year making wooden chess pieces, then, in late autumn of 1953, Uibo was transferred to a hospital in Camp No. 9 and did not see the American again. Uibo claims that Camp No. 18 was a close-hold camp for foreign prisoners. He heard that there were Americans from WWII in the camp (which held 6-7,000 prisoners), but never met any. Uibo stated that Camp No. 18 held Canadians and Germans from WWII, Japanese from the combat in Manchuria, and South Koreans. The records for Camp No. 18 and other Mordovia camps were kept at the directorate some 80-100 kilometers away. Camp No. 9 was a hospital camp used for both males and females. There was a separate cemetery for prisoners who died in the hospital, and each regular camp had its own cemetery. The prisoners were buried without coffins, their bodies stacked on top of each other. Uibo said that, in some cases, families were notified that their inmate-relative had died when he was, in fact, still alive.

(3) Early in the winter of 1954, Uibo was released from the hospital camp and transferred to Camp No. 5, where he worked in the power station. He claims to have met an "American Negro pilot" there. This American was "quite tall, more than 180cm, slim and athletic." The alleged American was assigned to a woodworking shop that made furniture for the Kremlin. The American's nickname was simply "Amerikanets"--Russian for "American." Uibo believes this inmate was still in Camp No. 5 when Uibo was freed on 30 March 1955.

(4) The TFR representative met with Mr. Harri Valdman, who had been cited as a potential source of POW/MIA information by General-Lieutenant Yazersky. Valdman said that, while he had served in ten different camps in the Vorkuta region between 1945 and 1955, he had never encountered American POWs, although he had heard that some American civilians were being held.

(5) Mr. Leo Sipelgas, an activist in the Estonian Political Prisoners Association, wanted to expand upon the information he previously provided to TFR. Sipelgas claims to have served with two alleged Americans in StepLag, Dzhezkazgan City, Kazakhstan, ln 1954. A white male named "Billy" claimed to have been arrested while on a spree in the Soviet sector of Berlin in 1951, along with his friend, who was black. Before coming to StepLag, the Americans had been held in Taishet. Billy's family name was "difficult," English or German, and not a common name like Smith or Johnson. Sipelgas stressed that the Soviets were very determined to hide the fact that there were Americans in the prison system. Sipelgas believes that other Americans were held elsewhere in Kazakhstan, at Karaganda, Tsiskazkhan, Baikonur and Balkhash. [Note: Other former inmates have cited American prisoners at each of these camp sites except for Tsiskazkhan.]

(6) TFR also attempted to contact Veikko Piiparinen, a friend of Mr. Valdman's, who had been cited as a potential information source by General Yazerskiy. Mr. Piiparinen was not at home during TFR's visit to Estonia, but Amembassy Tallinn followed up the case and conducted an interview, the results of which are pending. Amembassy personnel in Estonia were consistently and generously supportive of TFR's effort.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 161156Z AUG 93]

C. TFR met with Major-General (Retired) Yuri Yakovlevich Kirshin, who is completing a book on the Soviet Union's role in the Korean War. Although an outline of this book provided to JCSB by Major-General John Singlaub (U.S. Army, Retired) highlighted POW-related information, in this interview Kirshin denied that any such matters were addressed in his text. He stated, however, that he had found the names of two U.S. pilots in a 2 February 1951 telegram from then-MGB chief in Korea, Postnikov, to General-Lieutenant Shalin, who, according to Kirshin, was Chief for Intelligence on the General Staff in Moscow. These pilots, Lieutenants Smith and Harvey, had been interrogated and reports were to follow [JCSB note: A Lieutenant Smith is carried as missing from the crew of a B-26 downed in Korea, but, as of this writing, no reference has been found to a Lieutenant Harvey in the U.S. records. JCSB will continue to search]. Although expressing a strongly negative opinion of the Joint Commission's efforts and staffing, Kirshin gradually warmed to the possibility of assisting in the POW search. He suggested talking to more Russian Korean War veterans and volunteered to help focus any list of names TFR might obtain. TFR will continue to try to obtain a copy of Kirshin's manuscript.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 121020Z AUG 93]

D. TFR met with Evgenii Vasilievich Kobelov, senior researcher at the Russian Institute of Oriental Studies. Kobelov presented TFR with a list titled, "Certain Information About American Pilots." The list contains names of alleged Vietnam-era U.S. aviators. It has been forwarded to JCSB, as well as to the Southeast Asian analyst in DPMO's Research and Analysis Division.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 121132Z AUG 93]

E. TFR met, in Moscow, with the leadership of the Moscow City Council for Veterans of War and Labor. The purpose of the visit was to acquaint the organization with TFR's mission and to seek assistance in locating former Soviet servicemen who might have useful information. The leadership suggested placing a notice in their organization's newspaper, *Veteran,* and asked TFR to prepare a list of specific questions that could be raised at the next council meeting.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 121138Z AUG 93]

F. TFR met with Aleksey Alekseyevich Novotochinov at his office in the Russian White House. Novotochinov had previously contacted TFR, promising to pass on pertinent documents. While Novotochinov's efforts are clearly well-intended, the documents provided have no immediate impact on the tasks of the Joint Commission. Novotochinov remains, however, an important contact whose interest in POW/MIA issues provides us with a channel to Russian legislators.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 121138Z AUG 93]

G. TFR received a letter from A.M. Agonov, who claims to have met two Koreans and a Japanese in 1958 while he was serving in the Soviet Air Force on Sakhalin. His contacts claimed that there were many skeletons of U.S. POWs shot by the Japanese east of the village of Sokol.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 041201Z AUG 1993]

H. TFR met with Vladimir Ivanovich Korotayev, Deputy Director of the Russian Central Historical Documentary Collection (archive), Lyudmilla L'vovna Nosyryova, Chief Researcher, and Vasiliy Vasiliyevich Tolochko, Assistant General Director of the "Military Memorials" association. The meeting

reviewed progress on the six-month cooperative research agreement, which will expire on 5 September 1993. To date, the Russians have reviewed 472 files, approximately 10% of which contain names of Americans associated with WWII German POW camps. About 450 names have been entered into the data base (TFR loaned the archive laptop computers). Nosyryova stated that all pertinent files will have been reviewed by the expiration of the contract. Both sides agreed to consider what additional research might be advantageous under the terms of a follow-on agreement.

[MSG CITE: AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 041201Z AUG 93]

I. JCSB analysts, following an in-depth study of documents provided by the Russian side, have concluded that some information may have been- withheld when key documentation was passed to the U.S. side. Specifically, the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense should hold the names and crucial captivity documentation on U.S. aviators from Korea. This information could be found in Fond 64 IAP (Fighter Aviation Regiment), Inventory 174045ss, File 143, Pages 269-285 and from page 297 to the end of this file. TFR will request these documents from the Russian side.

J. JCSB analysts have pieced together evidence that a Korean War F-86 pilot, Captain Albert G. Tenney, may have been transferred, together with his aircraft, to the former Soviet Union, where pilot and plane were delivered to Moscow for exploitation by the MiG and Sukhoi design bureaux.

(1) Captain Tenney was forced down over the mouth of the Yalu River. His flight leader observed him diving away from an enemy MiG and executing evasive maneuvers at a very low altitude. The flight leader warned- him about his altitude and told hi-m to pull up. Immediately thereafter, Tenney leveled the wings of his F-86 and struck the water in a low-angle, high-speed glide approximately three miles offshore from the mouth of the Yalu. A concentration of enemy aircraft forced the flight leader to leave the area. Prior to his departure, the flight leader did not see the aircraft sink or Tenney abandon the plane. Later in the day, search aircraft returned to the scene, but found no trace of Tenney or his aircraft. North Korean surface craft were in the vicinity.

(2) A TFR interview has revealed that an F-86 was captured intact in North Korea, then shipped to the Moscow aircraft design bureaux. The interview subject stated that the aircraft arrived full of sand and that the pilot of this F-86 was sent to Moscow along with the aircraft.

(3) JCSB interviewed ex-POW Brigadier-General Michael Dearmond, USAF, Retired. General Dearmond's F-86 was shot down and he was interrogated by Russians. He recounted a mystifying incident in which a North Korean interrogator produced an officer's club purchase coupon book, or "chitbook," and asked Dearmond what it was. The interrogator said that the pilot had crashed into the Yalu and died, but Dearmond noted that the chitbook was intact and clearly had never been wet. Dearmond disbelieved the interrogator's account of the pilot's fate.

(4) On 21 December 1992, TFR received 72 pages of Korean-era documentation from the Russian side. The documentation included inventories of the personal effects taken from shot-down U.S. pilots. Only one of these inventories lists a chitbook. That inventory is for Captain Albert G. Tenney, whose incident is discussed in paragraphs (1) and (2) above.

(5) JCSB believes there is a reasonable possibility that Tenney's plane, which did not break up, was towed to shore, where it was dragged up the beach, accounting for the sand in the fuselage of the aircraft transferred to Moscow. If this was Captain Tenney's plane, he may have survived his unscheduled landing at the mouth of the Yalu.

(6) Captain Tenney also appears on the Russian-supplied "List of 59," with the title "A List of United States Air Force Personnel Shot Down in Aerial Combat and by Anti-Aircraft Artillery During Military Operations in Korea [and] *Who Transited Through an Interrogation Point."* [Emphasis added.]

4. Recommendations:

A. In light of the reports of U.S. POWs incarcerated in the local camp system, TFR should request full and expedited access to the GULag archives for Mordovia.

B. TFR should continue to pursue access to pertinent security service archives.

C. TFR should continue to work with veterans' groups in Russia, seeking information on Soviet POW-related activity in Korea and Indochina.

D. TFR should raise the case of Captain Tenney with the Russian-side, requesting-a specific accounting of the exploitation of the U.S. F-86(s) by the Moscow area aerospace design bureaux.

E. TFR should continue to solicit the cooperation of General Kirshin.

F. TFR should consider an extended deployment to the Komi ASSR to further research local camp archives, to visit local camps, and to interview local residents.